The Science of the Mind

BEYOND THE PLEASURE PRINCIPLE. By Sigmund Freud. International Psycho-Analytical Press.
FANTASIA OF THE UNCONSCIOUS. By D. H. Lawrence. Thomas Seltzer.
THE NEW PSYCHOLOGY AND THE TEACHER. By H. Crichton Miller. Thomas Seltzer.
CHILD PSYCHOLOGY. By Vilhelm Rasmussen. In three volumes. Alfred A. Knopf.
JUST NERVES. By Austen Fox Riggs. Houghton Mifflin Company.
NERVES AND PERSONAL POWER. By D. Macdougall King. Fleming H. Revell Company.
THE KINGDOM OF EVILS. By E. E. Southard and Mary C. Jarrett. The Macmillan Company.
THE BIOLOGY OF DEATH. By Raymond Pearl. J. B. Lippincott Company.

ALTHOUGH psychology is one of the youngest of the sciences, it is by no means the least developed, for while we are still perhaps only at the threshhold of psychological exploration, yet the wealth of attention which has of recent years been devoted to the subject has revolutionized our conception of the mind. As proof that the interest in psychology is by no means on the wane, we need do no more than consult the various books under review, which deal with numerous phases of the psychological and the near-psychological, endeavoring to examine the evolution of the soul from before birth until the moment of death.

First among the books on the list we may mention "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," by Sigmund Freud, if for no other reason than that the author is the man who exploded some of our commonest psychological conceptions by throwing a bomb whose detonations were heard around the world and have not yet ceased resounding. In this little volume is set forth some of Freud's characteristic and fundamental philosophy; the author inquires into the psychic meaning of pleasure and the impulses it arouses, and reaches the conclusion that "the search for pleasure manifests itself with far greater intensity in the beginning of psychic life than later on, but less unrestrictedly; it has to put up with far greater breaches. At a maturer age the dominance of the pleasure principle is very much more assured, though this principle as little escapes limitations as all the other instincts."

Along with "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" we may mention D. H. Lawrence's "Fantasia of the Unconscious," a volume that sets forth a philosophy involving many elements of Freudianism, but that has the advantage of being embodied in a simpler style and more readily comprehensible language than the works of Freud. Lawrence is one of the ultra-radicals among psychological writers; he wields an iconoclastic sword and wields it energetically and with a challenge; there is an air of bravado about him as of one who delights in breaking images, and something of the mischievous boldness of the small boy who glories in defying his elders. For, while all that he writes is interesting, Lawrence has the manner of not caring for a thing "so irrelevant as a reader"; he is overflowing with cocksureness and revels in the gusto and variety of his own beliefs. For all that, there is much that is profoundly true in his book, and much that, while questionable, is well worthy of thought and inquiry; and what the author has to say is worth reading, whether it concerns the training of children, the meaning of parent love, the significance of sex, or the relations of husband and wife or of teacher and pupil.

Similar in many respects to Mr. Lawrence's book, in that it subjects educational methods to the light of recently acquired psycho-analytical knowledge, is H. Crichton Miller's volume on "The New Psychology and the Teacher." Here we find a study of the emotional development of the boy and of the girl, of the mental mechanism of the young and of the subconscious motives that underlie character of reality and fantasy as they appear in the mind of the child, of dream symbolism and of the herd instinct and the herd ideal. The author emphasizes the importance of the expression of the creative impulse in children, and insists that the thing primarily desirable is that the individual psyche be allowed to develop and that the child be permitted the right "to advance at his own pace and in his own way."

The training of children likewise forms the central theme of Vilhelm Rasmussen's three volumes on "Child Psychology," but here we are brought in contact only with the very young and consider the mental processes of the child from the time of birth up till the age of 6 or 7. Although the author has a firm background of scientific knowledge, he proceeds primarily by the method of describing the doings and sayings of his two infant daughters; and, as a consequence, what he has to say has not only the impress of reality but the sparkle of genuine interest. Children of 5 and 6 are demonstrated to be more intelligent than is generally imagined, more capable of reasoning and of making independent observations. The author shows how the soul develops during the first years of life just as the body develops; and his work is eminently readable as well as highly valuable largely because he illustrates his conclusions by specific examples from the unfolding mental life of his two children.

The improper training of children, it is generally recognized, is one of the leading causes of nervousness in later life. How to avoid this ailment is told in the two volumes by Austin Fox Riggs and D. Macdougall King. In his little treatise entitled, "Just Nerves," Dr. Riggs lays down what he terms "common sense rules;" he insists that nervousness is not a disease, but a disorder; and he contends that this disorder can be overcome if, first of all, we are brought to realize the factors involved, and if, secondly, we learn to "keep instinctive forces under the intelligent control of the will, in order to realize through these very forces our ideals." Somewhat more comprehensive is Dr. King's volume on "Nerves and Personal Power," wherein we find a discussion of "the nervous machine," instincts and emotions, environment and adaptation, suggestion and dissociation, unhealthy mental habits, and the criterion of good and evil. It is the author's belief that we can attain success and contentment in life only through self-control and through the intelligent effort to derive all possible good from our surroundings; that "happiness and satisfaction in life can come in no other way than through the successful striving of the moral self to adapt the body and the mind to their physical and mental environment."

Differing mainly in degree from nervous ailments are those disorders generally classed together under the heading of "insanity." In the volume entitled "The Kingdom of Evils" we find a voluminous treatment of his subject; the book consists of a classification of the various mental diseases, together with a study of one hundred assorted cases, and should prove valuable both for the physician and for the social worker.

The remaining volume, Raymond Pearl's "Biology of Death," can hardly be considered psychological except in so far as it deals with a subject that by its very nature cannot escape a close relationship to psychology. What is it that happens when a living being dies? What are the forces that cause death? Why is it that some men are short lived and others long lived, that creatures of some species live for but a few days while members of other species survive for a century? These and similar questions are interestingly answered by Professor Pearl; the author concludes that life is potentially immortal, and that it is only the differentiation of parts in organic beings that causes their death; that longevity, like the color of the eyes or the texture of the hair, follows the Mendelian law, and that each man is born with a tendency either to a long or to a short life, so that one who expends his energies at a rapid rate may have an interesting career but perish relatively soon, while one who conserves his innate forces and remains immune from accidents will survive as long as his heredity makes possible.

Two Coue Books

EMIL COUE, THE MAN AND HIS WORK. By Hugh Macnachten, vice-provost of Eton College. Dodd, Mead & Co.

MR. MACNACHTEN writes at times with the uplifted spirit of the lame man healed, and again with particularizing detail of how far he had fallen short of being "healed" of his infirmity. He was a thoroughgoing skeptic to begin with, but after many fruitless journeyings through the world in search of the change which might lessen or drive away his insomnia he turned squarely about from his scornful attitude and went to Nancy in order to be near Coue and get any special good which might possibly accrue by receiving the healing influence in the healer's familiar surroundings. He advises all needing help to go to Nancy if they can. Says he: "The reward is greater in proportion to the greater cost. If you have been obeying wrong auto-suggestions for nearly sixty years and bad habits have become ingrained you had better go to Nancy if it be possible. That will give you all the chances, and probably you will need them all."

This patient declares that for him it was necessary to go to Nancy, "and even so, it was touch and go; I had wonderful luck in the company of a sister and the presence of a friend, but I came away sleeping no better, perhaps actually worse, than before; yet I did not come away without the sure and certain hope of recovery." The whole atmosphere of Coue's little house and surroundings was helpful and inspiring; the prevailing sense—as it were, in the air—of mutual helpfulness which covered all the patients gathered together in Coue's rooms was as difficult to describe as it was actually stimulating. Mr. Macnachten remarks upon the next to impossibility of creating such an atmosphere in London.

Here then is the utterly persuaded testimony of an English doubter, who went filled with all the "inhibitions" of the schools, and came away like Christian when his burden had fallen from his shoulders, and was gone, forever.

MY PILGRIMAGE TO COUE. By Ella Boyce Kirk. American Library Service.

MRS. KIRK enjoys the distinction of being the first American to be cured by Emil Coue, at his home in Nancy, of a distressing bodily ailment which all sorts of practitioners had tried vainly to remove or relieve. She says: "For seventeen years I have been taking every form of treatment for stiffening and contraction of the muscles and was rapidly becoming unable to walk. Having read of Emil Coue, I decided as a last resort to go to Nancy. I had hope but no faith, but after the first treatment I felt much better. Nevertheless, I suffered intense pain in the lower limbs. Since the second treatment there has been no recurrence of the pain or stiffness. The improvement is increasing and I can now walk with ease."

In her clearly written chapters Mrs. Kirk tells how her swollen and stiffened leg muscles had almost disabled her. Her physician told her that she would soon be unable to walk, and this dismal prospect impelled her to make an experiment while she could still move about. And while the physical pain was great, the prospect of approaching loneliness and incapacity was unbearable. "It was the fear of being useless that chilled my heart." Mrs. Kirk earlier in life had been the first woman school superintendent in America and always an active social factor in the life of her home city. The prospect of helplessness was heavier than she could bear, so she started with her niece to visit the man whose fame had been spread so gladly by the unquestioning belief of many persons whose lives he had almost literally restored to them. She tells the story of her stay in Nancy very simply but with intense conviction. "In less than a week I found I could do things without conscious effort that I had been unable to do for years. It was then that the real cure was effected. . . . After three months I walk as well and easily as I did twenty years ago."

Mrs. Kirk's various chapters contain some general phases and aspects of autosuggestion, as well as the record of her own experiences. And she ends her most interesting little book of ninety-two small pages with a formulation of her full belief in M. Coue's complete devotion, earnestness of purpose and close following of the precept, "Freely ye have received, freely give."

The scientific world has been so impressed by the two voyages of the intrepid Dr. Walter E. Traprock of "Cruise of the Kawa" fame that it is rumored that there is a concerted movement on the part of the scientific societies of Europe to urge Dr. Traprock to cross the Atlantic next year and solve some of the age long geographical problems.

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Giovanni Gentile, whose "The Reform of Education" was published by Harcourt, Brace and Company in the "European Library" series a short time ago, has been made Italian Minister of Education.